

This passage takes place some 50 years after the time of Jeroboam, the king of Israel. When King Ahaziah's sends messengers to ask a false god whether he would survive his recent injuries, the prophet Elijah intercepts and rebukes them and the king for not consulting with the LORD, the God of Israel. Elijah sends the messengers back to the king with the message that the king will die.

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1 Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

David had defeated Moab and they had been serving and paying tribute to Israel ever since (2 Sam. 8:2). However, after Ahab's defeat and death in battle against Syria (1 Kings 22:35), Moab took advantage of the situation to rebel and no longer pay tribute to Israel.

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2 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.

**“And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick [to be weak]”** – Ahab's son, Ahaziah, who had assumed the throne after his father's death, was injured when he accidentally fell from an upstairs chamber in his house. The Hebrew word used for “sick” is a general term referring to any weakness, whether due to illness or a physical injury. **“and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease [sickness]”** – The king's injuries were severe enough for him to be concerned about whether or not he would recover from them. He sends messengers to the Philistine city of Ekron to ask their god Baal-zebub about whether or not he would survive his injuries.

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3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?*

**“But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite”** – The LORD sends a message to Elijah through an angel. There are examples in the OT when the “angel of the LORD” appears and speaks as if he were God and so a case can be made that these may have been pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus Christ (such as Gen. 16:7-14; Judges 2:1-4). Some commentators suggest that this angel speaking to Elijah may have been one of these appearances of a pre-incarnate Christ.

**“Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them”** – Elijah is instructed to intercept the messengers that King Ahaziah has sent to Ekron and give them a message from the LORD.

**“Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?”** – Ahaziah had ignored the LORD and sent his messengers to get answers from a foreign god. The LORD instructs Elijah to ask the question of why the king is going outside of Israel to appeal to a foreign god instead of the LORD God of Israel? The king had bypassed the LORD God that was capable of giving him the answers he wanted in order to consult a fake god that was incapable of answering him.

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4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

Elijah's message from the LORD provided the answer to the question that Ahaziah had wanted to ask Baal-zebub, demonstrating that the LORD was perfectly capable of answering the king's inquiries if he had only sought the LORD instead of Baal-zebub. The implication here is that Ahaziah would have recovered from his injuries if he had appealed to the LORD instead of Baal-zebub.

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5 And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back?

The king realized that his messengers had not been gone long enough to have traveled to Ekron and back. He asks why they have returned without going to Ekron as he had commanded them to do.

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6 And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.*

The messengers tell Ahaziah that an unknown man had stopped them and instructed them to return to the king with a message from the LORD. They deliver the message that Elijah had instructed them to give to the king instead of continuing to Ekron. Apparently there was something about the experience that compelled them to obey Elijah's instructions (and thereby disobey the king) despite not knowing who this man was.

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7 And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? 8 And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

**“And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words?”** – Since these messengers didn't recognize the man who had stopped them and given the message, the king asks them to describe the man.

**“And they answered him, He was an hairy man [a possessor of hair], and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins”** – The Hebrew word translated “hairy man” could refer to either of two things: 1) he was physically hairy, or 2) he wore a garment made from hair. Clothing made of hair seemed to be associated with prophets, such as what John the Baptist wore (**Matt. 3:4** “*And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey*”). John the Baptist was predicted to have “the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), and later John would dress in similar fashion to Elijah. Elijah may have worn this manner of dress either because of his role as a prophet or perhaps this was his personal preference.

**“And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite”** – Ahaziah recognized Elijah from the description of his clothes, so it may be that Elijah was the only man that the king knew that spoke for the LORD and dressed this way. He likely also knew that this boldness was typical behavior for Elijah.

9 Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

**“Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty”** – Apparently the king did not appreciate Elijah’s words or the predication of his death, so he sent a squad of fifty men and their captain to arrest Elijah. The king may have been motivated by anger or an intent to force Elijah to predict life instead of death for the king. Obviously there would be no need for such a large force of men if the king was sending a friendly invitation to the prophet.

**“And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill”** – Evidently it was no secret that Elijah was residing on the top of a mountain. Commentators suggest that Elijah was on Mt. Carmel, a location he seemed to frequent.

**“And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down”** – The captain addresses Elijah as a “man of God.” It’s not obvious if the captain used this description because Elijah was a prophet that spoke for God, or if it was more sarcastic in nature. As a man of God, Elijah’s responsibility was to obey God but the captain issued the king’s command that Elijah should “come down” (surrender and come to the king). The king’s command seemed to be challenging what the LORD had commanded Elijah to do.

10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I *be* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

**“And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I *be* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty”** – Obviously Elijah did not personally have the power to cause fire to come down from heaven and consume these soldiers. Elijah was instead depending on the LORD to prove whether or not he truly was a man of God. This is similar to the challenge on Mt. Carmel against the 450 prophets of Baal where Elijah asked the LORD to prove to the people that He was the true God of Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39). Elijah would not come down until the LORD told him to do so, not because of the king’s command.

**“And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty”** – The LORD responded to Elijah’s request and proved that not only was Elijah a man of God, but that the LORD’s authority superseded that of the king.

11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

**“Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty”** – Ahaziah likely had heard what had happened to the first captain and his fifty (the third captain had definitely heard in v. 14) but that obviously didn’t deter him from sending another captain of fifty and his men to arrest Elijah.

**“And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly”** – This time the command seems more urgent and demanding. The command is not only that Elijah should come down, but also that he should obey immediately.

12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I *be* a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

Elijah’s response and the result from the LORD was the same as when the first captain and his fifty men confronted Elijah.

13 And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. 14 Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

**“And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty”** – Ahaziah is stubborn enough to send a third captain and his 50 men.

**“And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought [to seek favor] him”** – The attitude and behavior of this third captain was quite the opposite of the first two. He comes to Elijah with an attitude of humility instead of demanding obedience to the king.

**“and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight”** – The captain asks that Elijah would show mercy and allow him and his men to live.

**“Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties”** – This man understood what had happened to the previous squads of men that had come to confront Elijah and did not want this to happen to him and his men.

**“therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight”** – He begs that Elijah would not treat him and his men like the previous captains.

15 And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

The LORD (refer to notes on “the angel of the LORD” in v. 3) gives Elijah permission to go with this captain and his men since this captain, who was humble instead of being insistent and demanding, had no intentions of harming Elijah.

16 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, *is it* not because *there is* no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

Elijah did not change the LORD’s message once he was face to face with the king. He repeated the message that he originally gave to Ahaziah’s messengers in v. 3-4. The LORD’s word proved to be true because Ahaziah died soon after (v. 17), having reigned for only two years (1 Kings 22:51). Ahaziah had no son to take his place on the throne, so his brother, Jehoram, became king at Ahaziah’s death.